



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE

VOL. XIX.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, MARCH 26, 1869.

No. 33.

PASTORAL LETTER OF HIS LORDSHIP THE BISHOP OF MONTREAL,

Publishing the Apostolic Letter of Our Holy Father Pope Pius IX. to the Protestants and other Non-Catholics.

IGNATIUS BURNETT by the Grace of God and the favor of the Apostolic See Bishop of Montreal Assistant at the Pontifical Throne.

To the Secular and Regular Clergy, the Religious Communities, and all the Faithful of Our Diocese, Health and Blessing in Our Lord.

§ 1.—PREAMBLE.

On the thirteenth of September last, Our Holy Father the Pope addressed to our separated brethren an Apostolic Letter breathing nothing but charity, to invite them to seek the true religion, in order to profit by the Ecumenical Council which he convoked on the twentieth of June last. This Letter has been sent to Us, D. B. B., in order that we may take some means by which those, who, living outside of the fold of Jesus Christ, cannot hear the voice of His Vicar upon earth, may be made acquainted with the Pastor of the whole Catholic Church. Wherefore, after carefully considering the matter in the presence of God, we have judged it our duty to make use of you all, D. B. B., to bring this important Letter to the knowledge of those to whom it is directly addressed. In consequence thereof, We cause it to be published in all the churches of this Diocese, charging you, D. B. B., to be the faithful interpreters of the sentiments which animate our common Father towards brethren whom we all love in Jesus Christ. This means has appeared to us the most proper for attaining an object so desirable for all the children of the Church.

For many of them live in our midst: they are your neighbors, your friends, your fellow citizens your associates, your patrons or your clients, and perhaps even your near relatives. It follows therefore, that you have intimate relations with them, more or less frequently, either on account of business or on account of politeness, friendship and civility.

Amid this intercourse, it is quite natural that you should speak to them of our grand beautiful ceremonies and of the instructions which are given in our churches. By this means you excite in them a laudable curiosity which induces them to come and see what is done, and to hear what is said at our religious assemblies. There are, furthermore, many among them who like to hear the word of God, and who feel themselves inferiorly attracted towards the religion of their forefathers. Besides, they are tired at seeing themselves continually fluctuating amid the doctrines which change like the wind, and which, consequently, are unable to satisfy the hearts of those who seek the truth with sincerity.

On the other hand, God who has created them like ourselves to his own image, and redeemed them at the price of his blood in order to give them eternal happiness, does not fail, in His infinite goodness to warn them interiorly, that they are on a false road, walking in the way of error; and that they ought to seek the truth which alone can produce them peace of heart.

If then, D. B. B., you tell them that Our Holy Father the Pope, whose name is so glorious throughout the whole world, has addressed them a Letter which breathes naught but love and charity; and that in all the churches, this admirable document is read; may we not presume that they will like to hear it read and explained by your pastors, and even to procure themselves copies of it, in order to examine it more attentively in private.

The mission you have to fulfil, D. B. B., is very simple, but also very important, if you seriously consider it. For you are charged to collect with religious respect, the words which fall from the mouth of the Church's common Father, to be penetrated with them yourselves, in order to transmit them to brethren whom you love, but whose errors you deeply deplore. You thus become echoes of that mysterious voice, which pronounces so many oracles, makes known so many truths and spreads abroad so many flames of divine charity, for the salvation of countless millions of souls.

For this end, it behoves you to be well acquainted with this Letter, which contains the grand principles upon which repose all the solidity and harmony of our holy religion. You will therefore make it a duty to study it carefully, by listening attentively to the instructions which will be given to you upon it, by reading for yourselves this solemn appeal of the best of Fathers to cherished children, whose loss he bitterly regrets, and by contemplating in it, the immensity of the purest charity with which it overflows, in order to let us see the length and the depth and the width of his fatherly love.

There is here question, note it well, D. B. B., of doing everything in our power that this Apostolic Letter may not be a dead Letter. Now it would be one, were it to pass unperceived: if nobody spoke of it; if it did not come to the knowledge of those whom it ought to warn that

they are walking in a bad way; if it were not well understood; if it did not excite a lively interest, as is becoming to a document of such great importance; if it were not appreciated as it ought to be; if it were not protected against false interpretations which will not fail to be made; if, in a word, it did not produce, throughout the whole world, a great movement in the minds and hearts of those who call themselves the children of God.

But if this Letter were to be only a dead letter, D. B. B., would it not be a veritable dishonor for our holy religion, a great ignominy for our common Father, and a profound humiliation for ourselves? Undoubtedly, you all feel this acutely in the inmost of your souls; and you resolve to apply yourselves seriously to the work, to render yourselves capable of fulfilling the mission with which you are charged. Religion expects of you that you will do your duty. Once more, it is necessary, that the Apostolic Letter addressed to our separated brethren by Our Holy Father the Pope, should come to their knowledge through the medium of good Catholics, who will communicate it to them by every means in their power. You will therefore listen with holy avidity, to the instructions which your zealous pastors will not fail to give you on the subject. Rest assured that the Lord will inspire them what to say to you on so serious a subject, and he will give to you the intelligence you stand in need of, to seize those principles which it is necessary to engrave in all hearts.

Such, dearly beloved brethren, are the principal reasons which should inflame your zeal, in order to second the efforts made by the common Father of the great Christian family, for the conversion of our dear separated brethren.

Whilst listening to the Apostolic Letter he has addressed to them, you will observe, that he presents himself to them as the successor of St. Peter, set over the government of the whole church, and that he calls their attention to the intimate union which exists between himself and all the Catholic Bishops whom he has convoked in an ecumenical council.

Why then, D. B. B., this preamble? Is it because our separated brethren ignore that the reigning Pope is the immortal Pius IX? Certainly not; many of them have seen this admirable Pontiff, have heard him, have spoken to him, have assisted at the grand demonstrations of which he has been the object, during his long and glorious Pontificate; and it may be affirmed, that those among them who are the most honorable on account of their education and their lofty sentiments, respect his person, admire his wisdom and love the mildness of his government.

Why then, once more, this preamble? Because, since the Reformation, that is to say, for more than three hundred years since the ties were broken which united the forefathers of our separated brethren with the Holy See, the Pope has hardly been known to them save under the name of Antichrist; and Rome, the capital of his empire, as a veritable Babylon.

It was therefore necessary, on making them hear his voice as Pastor and Father, for the first time since that unfortunate and fatal epoch, he should officially inform them that he truly occupies the chair of St. Peter; that he governs the Church with all the authority which Our Lord Himself has given unto him; that all the Catholic Bishops recognise him as their chief; that they would soon arrive in Rome, there to hold a grand Council; and that he calls them also thither, that they may derive the most precious advantages from the Council.

With these general observations, you will perfectly enter into the meaning of this beautiful and admirable Letter of which the following is the preamble.

§ 2.—Motives for the Convocation of the Future Ecumenical Council.

Apostolic Letter of Our Holy Father Pope Pius IX., to all the Protestants and other Non-Catholics.

PIUS IX.

"You are already aware, that having been raised in spite of Our unworthiness, to this chair of Peter, placed consequently over the supreme government of the entire Catholic Church, and divinely entrusted with its preservation by Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, We have judged fitting to call to Our presence Our Venerable Brethren the Bishops of the whole world, and to assemble them in order to celebrate, next year, an Ecumenical Council, so that in concert with these same Venerable Brethren, called to share Our solicitude, we may take all the resolutions which shall seem the most fitting and necessary, whether to dissipate the darkness of so many fatal errors which daily extend their empire more and more, and are being set loose to the great loss of souls, or to establish daily more and more, and to increase among the christian peoples confided to Our vigilance, the reign of the true faith, of justice and of the true peace of God. Firmly relying on the strict and dear compact of union

which so admirably attaches unto us and to this Holy See, these same Venerable Brethren, who have never ceased during the whole course of Our supreme Pontificate, to give to Us and to this Holy See the most convincing marks of their love and respect; we entertain a well-founded hope that the Ecumenical Council, convoked by Us in this present century, will, under the inspiration of divine grace, like the other General Councils in past ages, bring forth abundant fruits, a source of happiness, for the greater glory of God and the eternal salvation of men."

§ 3.—Marks of the True Church of Jesus Christ.

Such, D. B. B., are the first words which the good shepherd addresses to those of his dear flock, whom he sees wandering outside the fold of the Lord. It is in order to prepare them to receive those luminous and incontestable truths which he will propose after this magnificent preamble. For, as you are just going to see, he declares that there can only be one true Church of Jesus Christ: that this Church has been built upon Peter, who is like an immovable rock by the immutable stability of her teaching; that she is infallible, because her divine founder has promised to be with her until the end of the world: that those who wish can always recognise her, because she has striking and visible marks which distinguish her from other Churches, being "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic." This is what you are going to see, D. B. B., whilst listening to the following words:

"For this reason, buoyed up by this hope, cited and urged on by the charity of Our Lord Jesus Christ who gave his life for the salvation of the whole human race, we cannot help, on the occasion of the future Council, addressing Our Apostolic and paternal words to all those who recognizing the same Jesus Christ for their Redeemer, and glorying in the name of Christian, do not however, profess the true faith of Jesus Christ and do not follow the Communion of the Catholic Church. And We do this, in order to warn them, to conjure them and to beg of them, with all the ardor of Our zeal and in all charity, to consider well and to examine seriously if they follow the way traced out by the same Jesus Christ Our Lord, and which leads to eternal salvation. No one can deny, or call in doubt, that Jesus Christ himself, in order to apply the fruits of his Redemption to all human generations, has built upon Peter, in this world, his unique Church, that is to say, the 'One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic' Church, and that he gave to him all the power necessary that the deposit of faith might be preserved inviolate and intact; and that the same faith was taught to all peoples, to all races and to all nations, in order that all men might, through baptism, become members of his mystical body; and in them might always be preserved and perfected this new life of grace, without which no one can ever merit and obtain life everlasting; finally, that this same Church, which constitutes his mystical body, might ever remain stable and immovable in its own nature until the consummation of ages; that she might live ever blooming and in a condition to furnish all her children with the means of working out their salvation."

§ 4.—That none of the Protestant Churches has the marks of the True Church of Jesus Christ.

But it was not sufficient for the charity of the common Father, to have caused the distinguishing characteristics of the True Church of Jesus Christ to shine in all their brilliancy, before the eyes of our separated brethren. For, urged on by an ardent desire of showing them the road of truth, which can alone lead to everlasting life, he clearly shows them that none of the churches separated from the Roman Church, which alone is "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic," can attribute to itself these glorious privileges. For they are all divided one from the other, have nothing stable in their teaching, are in a perpetual fluctuation and change of opinions, have no authority to cause their symbol of faith to be admitted by dissentient sects; whence he concludes, that the truths revealed to men by the Redeemer of mankind, cannot be found in such societies or religious Congregations.

Oh! how they are to be pitted, being thus exposed to every wind of doctrine, and tossed about by the furious tempests of error and lying! How we ought to fear for all those who are thus held, the terrible misfortune that awaits them if they continue to sail on this stormy ocean! You must not be astonished then, if the common Father, seeing his children in such imminent danger of perishing eternally, raises his voice to make them hear such moving words which so well express his fatherly solicitude. This you are going to see in the following passage:

"Now, whosoever wishes to examine with care and to meditate upon the condition in which are to be found the different religious societies divided among themselves and separated from the Catholic Church, which ever since Our Lord

Jesus Christ, and his Apostles, has always exercised through her legitimate pastors, and still exercises the divine power which was given to her by the same Jesus Our Lord, such a one ought easily to be convinced, that no one of these societies, nor all of them together, constitute in any way, nor are they this Church One and Catholic which Our Lord has founded and built, and which he wished to create. And no one can furthermore affirm in any way, that these societies are a member, a part of this same Church, since they are visibly separated from Catholic unity. For, such societies being deprived of that living authority established by God, which especially teaches men the things of faith and the discipline of morality which are of rule in all that regards eternal salvation; they have constantly varied in their doctrines, and this changing and this instability in these societies, never cease. Every one then, perfectly understands, every one sees clearly and manifestly, that this is in complete opposition with the Church instituted by Our Lord, since in this Church, truth should always remain stable and inaccessible to all change, in order to preserve absolutely intact the deposit which has been confided to her, and for whose guardianship, the presence and the assistance of the Holy Ghost have been promised her forever."

§ 5.—From these divisions in the Church spring up deplorable evils in the State.

After exposing, as you have seen, D. B. B., the deplorable evils which are caused to Religion by these fatal divisions, which reign among the Religious Denominations separated from the Catholic Church, Our common Father descends to the lamentable disorders which they produce, even in the civil societies and governments of the world.

The touching words which fall on this solemn occasion, from the mouth of him whom is the highest Power that exists upon the earth, and who evidently stands at the head of his age, prove, once more, that Religion came down from Heaven with her divine founder, not only for the spiritual welfare of souls, but also for the prosperity of human societies. Oh! what happiness would reign throughout the entire world, if everywhere, people were attached to the true Church, which, ever guided by the Holy Spirit, ceases not to preach unto man the necessity of loving his fellows, of doing no wrong to any one, of holding revolutions in horror, of obeying every established government.

But, D. B. B., on that subject, listen to the Pope himself, and learn from him to dread the terrible consequences of the religious dissensions, which threaten, even at the present day, to overturn the whole world. The history of past ages, like that of the present time, is also on hand to confirm what our Father is about to say of the sad effects produced among all peoples, by dissensions in religious matters.

"No one, besides, can be ignorant of the fact, that these dissensions about doctrines and opinions have given rise to social schisms, these in their turn have given birth to communions and sects without number, which are every day being more and more extended to the great detriment of Christian and civil society. In fact, whosoever acknowledges that Religion is the foundation of human society, cannot fail to perceive with what powerful influence this division of principles, this opposition and this conflict of religious societies among themselves act upon civil society; and with what violence, this negation of the authority established by God to govern the belief of the human mind and to direct the actions of man, as well in his private as in his social life, has engendered, propagated and sustained these deplorable changes in things and times, those troubles which, at the present day, upset and oppress nearly every people."

As you have just seen, D. B. B., O. I. F. the Pope has placed himself directly in face of all the churches separated from Rome; he, as the successor of St. Peter, the universal Pastor of the whole Church, the Father of the great Christian family.

He has shown them, that the Catholic Church, of which he is the supreme head upon earth, is the only true Church founded by Jesus Christ, that she alone has truly the marks of unity, of sanctity, of Catholicity and of Apostolicity, which indicate to serious, reflecting minds, where they will find the truth; that in this Church alone, is preserved intact the deposit of heavenly truths, with the infallibility which is assured to her by the presence of the Holy Ghost, who has been given to assist and govern her invisibly.

Next, passing rapidly in review all the denominations which dispute the incomparable honor of being the true church, he causes them to see, as clearly as the sun at mid-day, that this cannot be the case; for they have varied too much, have too much changed their teaching during the short space of time they have existed, to pretend that they possess the treasure of truth, since truth cannot vary, cannot change: that what was true when Jesus Christ and the Apostles preached

throughout the world, is still true, and will always be true, unto the consummation of ages.

Finally, he has drawn a moving picture of the inappreciable advantages for the governments of the earth, which flow from the principles of public order professed by the divine religion, the government of which has been confided to him.

§ 6.—Appeal to our Separated Brethren.

After these frank, clear and luminous explanations, the good Pastor makes a fervent appeal to all the sheep whom he sees exposed to the fury of the wolves, because, unfortunately, they are given up to the errors of the human mind and are deprived of the divine assistance, which has been promised only to the Apostles and their legitimate successors, who alone, are the heirs to the infallible promises of God the Redeemer.—Observe in what moving, fatherly terms, this truly grand and solemn appeal is conceived. For he who speaks is the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the universal Pastor of the Church, the common Father of Christians; and he speaks to children who have the misfortune to be in error, through the fault of their ancestors and the evil of the times. Whilst listening, with religious attention, to this magnificent appeal repeating these words of charity and mercy which he has left in the Gospel: "And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also I must bring; and they shall hear my voice: and there shall be made one fold and one shepherd." (John 10.16.)

"Let all those who do not possess the unity of truth of the Catholic Church, seize the occasion of this Council, wherein the Catholic Church, to which their forefathers belonged, gives a new proof of her profound unity and of her invincible vitality, and giving satisfaction to the wants of their heart, let them endeavor to leave this state in which they cannot be assured of their salvation. And let them not cease to offer up the most fervent prayers to the God of mercies, that he may break down the wall of division, may drive away the darkness of error, and may lead them back to their Holy Mother the Church, in whose bosom alone is preserved and transmitted entire, the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and the mysteries of heavenly grace are dispensed."

"For ourselves, to whom the same Christ Our Lord has confided the charge of the Supreme Apostolic Ministry, and who ought, in consequence, to fulfil with the utmost zeal, all the functions of a good shepherd, and love with a fatherly love, and embrace in Our charity, all men scattered over the earth, we address this Letter to all the christians separated from Us, and we exhort them again and conjure them to hasten their return to the one fold of Christ. For We ardently desire their salvation in Christ Jesus, and We should fear to have one day to render an account to Him who is our judge, if we did not show them, and, as much as it lies in Our power, give them the assured means of finding out the way which leads to eternal salvation. In all Our prayers, supplicating and giving thanks, we cease not, day or night, to ask for them, humbly and earnestly of the Eternal Pastor of souls, an abundance of light and heavenly grace.

"And since, notwithstanding Our unworthiness, We are His Vicar upon earth, with hands uplifted, we await with the most ardent desire, the return of Our erring sons to the Catholic Church, in order that we may be able to receive them with love into the house of the Heavenly Father, and enrich them with his inexhaustible treasures. Upon this so ardently desired return to the truth and the communion of the Catholic Church, depends the salvation not only of individuals, but also of all christian society. The whole world is unable to enjoy true peace, if it does not become one flock under one shepherd."

"Given at Rome, near St. Peter's, September 13th 1868, and the twenty-third year of Our Pontificate."

Now, D. B. B., since we have heard these moving words, we shall further penetrate into the heart of Our Father, in order to be imbued with the sentiments that animate it. After his example, let us seize the occasion of the future Ecumenical Council to labor, as far as we can, to recall our separated brethren to the bosom of the Church, to which their forefathers belonged as well as our own. It is only three hundred years since they separated from it, and before that time they were Catholics like ourselves.—Evidently their religion does not go back to the Apostles, and consequently, it is not Apostolic. Let us make them understand that the Catholic Church, through this Appeal which she makes to them, causes to shine before their eyes her perfect unity and the spirit of life which animates her, in order to encourage them to go away from error to satisfy the need they all feel of truth, and of assuring their eternal salvation.

Let us engage them to unite their prayers with ours, to obtain of the Father of mercies the grace they so much stand in need of, to cause the wall of division which separates them from Rome to fall down, and to drive away the darkness of error which prevents them from entering the